



## July 2015 CHNewsletter

“Connecting to My English Catholic Heritage”  
By Ken Woodington ..... 1

“From Here to Eternity,  
Part Five: Conversion From Now to Eternity”  
By Dr. Kenneth J. Howell..... 3

“New Easter Converts”  
By CHNetwork Staff ..... A

“My Return Home: A Thank You”  
By Jean Ronan ..... C

# THE COMING HOME NETWORK INTERNATIONAL



## Connecting to My English Catholic Heritage

by Ken Woodington

My mainline Presbyterian upbringing in southern New Jersey in the 1950s and '60s was typical of many others at the time. The people in our church tended to be white Anglo-Saxon types. There were many Catholics in my small town, but they were usually of Irish, Italian, or Polish descent. On Sunday morning, the Catholics and Protestants were as separated from each other in America as they had been on the other side of the ocean. That seemed to be fine with both groups.

During my years of higher education, I never actually rebelled against the Presbyterian Church. In typical fashion, though, my interest in church matters waned during my high school and college years. It returned once I started law school.

In the next thirty years or so, I became very active in a Presbyterian church, serving as an elder and teaching adult Sunday School classes. Calvinistic Reformed theology rarely surfaced in my local Presbyterian church. I was not attracted to it when it did get mentioned.

### A personal connection to historic Christianity

My first awakening to the connection between family history and my personal religious heritage came during a Presbyterian All Saints' Day sermon. The sermon was about everyday saints, such as parents, who had played a significant role in our lives. I had never thought much about the idea of receiving specific religious instruction at home. My parents were good Protestant Christians, but any direct religious instruction they offered was

relatively rare. I came to learn that in my father's family in particular, there was not really a single, historic, family faith for him to pass along. The religious background of his family and his ancestors was too varied or in many cases, nonexistent. My mother had a more focused religious upbringing in the Southern Baptist Church, but any religious instruction from her was not expressed in terms of that denomination's beliefs.

Under these circumstances, it is no surprise that I, like many others of my baby boomer generation, did not think much about who my ancestors may have been and what they may have been like, much less what their religious inclinations may have been. Pope Francis recently noted that current-day youth are “crushed under the weight of the present [without] a memory of the past...” (*La Repubblica*, Oct. 1, 2013). This was also true for many of my generation, including me, especially in the sense of my being connected to specific people in the past. The absence of a passed-down religious tradition created a missing sense of heritage, religious and otherwise.

Continued on page 2

Journeys Home

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

Indeed, any knowledge of my own personal heritage was so completely missing that I did not even *realize* it was missing!

### The faith of my ancestors: Quakers and Methodists

I first became interested in genealogy and family history in the early 1990s, having heard that I was related to James Fenimore Cooper, the famous American author. The first Fenimore immigrants were Quakers who had left England for New Jersey in the late 1670s. I found that my grandmother's ancestors had included many other early New Jersey Quakers.

I began regarding family history, not just a matter of collecting the names of ancestors, but as a source of information about the formative influences in one's own life. As I learned about the history of the Quakers, and about my own Quaker ancestors, I admired their faithfulness, though their particular brand of the faith was not something to which I felt called. Viewed from our present historical distance, the Quakers of the late 1600s seem simple, devout, peaceful, and harmless, but their theology was actually rather radical. The website of a modern-day Quaker group that claims to retain the beliefs of the earliest Quakers declares that "[because] all people — Quaker or not — have always had direct and immediate access to God, we believe that all other sources of religious understanding are inessential and subordinate, including scriptures, church authority, tradition, reason, and formal religious education." As a result, Quaker beliefs "dispense with rites and ceremonies, ritualized sacraments, sacred books and buildings, creeds, clergy, and holy days."

Still, for me, it was a ground-breaking discovery to find that I did have a confirmed connection with individual people, identifiable by name, who belonged to a specific denomination. The religion of my ancestors transitioned over time from Quakerism to the Methodist Church, a new denomination that was similar in many ways to Quakerism, but without the latter's

more radical concepts. My paternal grandmother, born in 1891, had probably been a Methodist as a girl, but by the 1950s, she and her daughter (my aunt) had both become Christian Scientists, a sect that peaked in the mid-1930s. I can remember well seeing my grandmother reading the writings of Christian Science founder Mary Baker Eddy. In later years, though, both my grandmother and my aunt lost interest in that sect. The small congregations to which they belonged have since vanished.

### The faith of my ancestors: Anglicans in the attic

The story was somewhat different for the ancestors of my paternal grandfather. By the 1880s, this set of my ancestors was connected to the same local Methodist church as my grandmother's family, but instead of coming from a Quaker background, they had previously been loosely connected with the Episcopal Church.

My original Woodington ancestor came from England to Pennsylvania in the mid-1700s. The first several generations of Woodingtons in the United States identified with the Episcopal Church. My Woodington ancestors were probably Anglicans before they left England (making them closer to being Catholics than any of my other Protestant ancestors).

My grandfather was not a churchgoer by the time I knew him, but one of his great-grandfathers had been a lay Methodist minister in the late 19th century, and one of his grandmothers was ordained a deaconess in 1894 in the denomination known as the "Christian Church." Despite this background, though, my grandfather and the previous several generations of his Woodington ancestors apparently had little church involvement.

My father was baptized and confirmed a Presbyterian at the age of 18. This was the first known expression of religious interest by one of my Woodington ancestors in over a hundred years. My father's choice of a church was not driven

*Continued on page 5* ➤

## FEATURED RESOURCES



### The English Counter Reformation CD — By Fr. Charles Connor

In this insightful talk, Fr. Charles Connor describes the English Counter Reformation and how Catholicism survived in the difficult years following the English Reformation.



### Supremacy and Survival: How Catholics Endured the English Reformation — By Stephanie Mann

This book tells the story of the Catholic Church's survival and restoration in one land. It serves both as a lesson and a warning of the risks to faith and freedom when absolute power is given free reign. The persecution of Catholics began in 16th century England and tested the Church for over 250 years. In the 19th century, intellectual converts such as John Henry Newman and Henry Manning brought the merits of Catholicism a new respect in the eyes of Protestant public opinion. *Supremacy and Survival* will enkindle in its readers a greater knowledge and appreciation for the Catholic history of England.

\$35

Receive *The English Counter Reformation CD* for a \$35 donation.

\$50

Receive *Supremacy and Survival* for a \$50 donation.

\$75

Receive *The English Counter Reformation CD* and *Supremacy and Survival* for a \$75 donation.

— THESE PREMIUMS ARE AVAILABLE FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY —

Obtain premiums by returning the envelope included with your newsletter, calling 740-450-1175, or by going online to [chnetwork.org/premiums](http://chnetwork.org/premiums)

# From Here to Eternity: Five Essentials of Conversion

## PART FIVE: CONVERSION FROM NOW TO ETERNITY

By Dr. Kenneth J. Howell

When I was a boy growing up on the west coast of Florida, I used to stand on the beach looking west across the Gulf of Mexico, knowing that Mexico lay on the other side even though I had never seen it. All I could see was the line of the horizon on the water. Our expectation of heaven and being with God is much like that experience. We cannot see heaven and the horizon of our expectations is limited to the line of this world that we can see. But, just as I had it on good authority that Mexico did exist beyond the horizon, so we have it on the highest authority (God) that heaven exists. And, even more, heaven is the goal of our life. The Germans have two rhyming words which capture the essence of the Christian's hope: *diesseits* and *jenseits*. Literally, these words mean "this side" and "that side" but the latter word is often understood to refer to eternity or the life beyond this life. Few words capture more succinctly the heart of the Christian's hope and desire. If the horizon of our expectations is limited to this world, we will be sadly disappointed for it is only in the *jenseits* of eternity that the full flowering of our conversion is realized. Conversion is only about this world in preparation for the world to come. It is the movement from Here to Eternity.



In past installments, I have discussed four essential elements of conversion to Catholicism, all of which involve more than meets the eye. Becoming Catholic is not about changing churches or a system of theology, even though those are involved. Becoming Catholic is more about moving out of oneself into the wisdom of past Christian thinkers, drawing on their experience and knowledge in coming to know truth. It entails the acceptance of the Church as the teaching authority (*Magisterium*) to which every earnest Christian should gladly submit. It is about seeing the world through sacramental eyes, about divine realities under the guise of human realities. And most of all, it is about being a member of a worldwide society of people who, despite cultural and linguistic differences, are *one* in that Mystical Body of Christ. Yet even these four themes, as essential as they are, do not attain to the goal of conversion or *metanoia*. Without the hope of eternal life, these four essentials mean nothing. The ultimate reason to become Catholic far transcends anything in this world.

### Eyes on the Prize

Eternity with God is the goal of the Christian life. But what does it mean to be with God for eternity? When people come to understand Catholicism, they begin to realize that heaven is more than simply a place for being in God's presence. Paul describes eternity in the beautiful phrase, "knowing even as we are known" (1 Cor 13:12). Paul, in describing love in 1 Corinthians 13, arrives at the perfection of love. To be loved, in short, is to be known and to love is to know for one cannot love what one does not know. But here Paul is not using know in a purely cognitive sense as if one knows that  $2+2=4$ . Rather, he is using it in the same sense that Genesis 4:1 has, "Adam knew Eve his wife." This is the knowledge of intimate love. If someday we are to know and love God as He knows and loves us, then this is the perfection of our human nature.

Heaven then is not a place for being with God. It is God Himself. Being with God means being in God and therefore sharing in His life that is by its very nature eternal. This requires a purity of heart, as our Lord told us, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God" (Mt 5:7). The language of seeing God was developed by the early and medieval theologians into the doctrine of the Beatific Vision. Based on the Latin word for happiness (*beatus*), the Beatific Vision (*beata visio*) consists of the Vision of God (*visio Dei*). And it is a blessed seeing or vision because it is the state of perfect happiness for which human beings were made. Since God is love, the Beatific Vision is to be absorbed in love.

Being absorbed in God's Being, our human nature becomes completely divinized or deified, not to cease being human, but to find its human fulfillment in the Divine Nature. To some, no doubt, this will seem impossible or even irrational, but perhaps this is because we conceive of heaven as a place which is just a little higher version of our earthly life. We may rightly wonder how two beings, God and man, can both occupy the same space. In the physical world, it is certainly true that two beings cannot occupy the same space. But heaven is precisely that place where God's presence not only surrounds us as the air does on earth. Rather, in the *jenseits*, the heaven of our highest horizon, God's nature and presence penetrates as well as surrounds us. Heaven is a not specific place but a state of being in which every place is filled with God.

### From There to Here: The Mystical John

If heaven is as we have said, then the practical question becomes how to get there. It is natural to think of the things we must do or the practices we must follow to arrive finally in heaven. But the real answer — and the most profound one — is not how to get from here to there but how to bring there to here for the message of the gospel is not man in search of God — that is natural religion — but God in search of man. How does the Eternity of Heaven, God Himself, Continued on page 4 ➤

come from *there* and *then* to the *here* and *now*? The answer lies closer than we may imagine.

Turning afresh to the Gospel of John, we begin to glimpse the pervasive message of what is probably the most mystical book of the New Testament. The Prologue to the Gospel (Jn 1:1-18) is an explanation of the origins of Jesus of Nazareth. Yet, unlike Matthew and Luke who begin with Jesus' earthly life, John reaches back into the eons of eternity, to the very beginning of time. Modeling his language on Genesis 1:1 ("In the beginning"), John peers into the time before time, into the invisible, intangible world for it is in that world, the world of the *Jenseits* that the true rationale (λογος) lies in explaining the origins of this world and of Jesus.

When John speaks of the Logos, he implies much more than the common translation of "Word." He is referring to the rationale or explanation of the universe and all created reality. He is pointing to the source of illumination and the life-giving reality of God as the principle and foundation of all. It is this fuller meaning that makes John 1:14 so astounding, "The Logos became flesh and dwelt among us." In John's world, the idea of the ultimate Reality of God actually becoming man, of taking on flesh, is unheard of and absurd. The Jews could not countenance the idea and the Greeks would have thought it stupidity. This is proved by how many times in the history of the Church either the humanity (e.g., Docetists) or the divinity (e.g., Arians) of Jesus was denied. But this Enfleshment, this Incarnation, is at the heart of the gospel. If it is not true, then all Christianity is a farce. The message of Christ is that the *there* and *then* of heaven has come to the *here* and *now* of earth.

John's theme of the Logos becoming flesh makes sense of the unique contribution of John to understanding Jesus of Nazareth. The presence of the divine Son of God, the Logos, in our world implies the sanctification of all physical reality. The entire universe becomes a kind of sacrament because physical things now embody spiritual realities. All the specific parts of the world can become holy, conveyors of God's grace. This is the background that makes sense of Baptism in John 3 and the Eucharist in John 6.

All the Church Fathers tell us that when Jesus said, "a man must be born of the water and of the Spirit," He was speaking about Baptism. The perplexity of Nicodemus over this enigmatic saying prompts Jesus to bring in the perspective of eternity, "Unless a man is born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (Jn 3:5). Nicodemus was incredulous partly because he did not understand or believe that such a ritual as Baptism could actually open up the doors of heaven. Yet, in a worldview defined by the Incarnation, and from a perspective of spiritual embodiment in physical things, eternal life is not something far off and unattainable. The beginnings of eternal life commence now.

In John 3 Jesus speaks about entry into the kingdom of God but in John 6 he speaks about the daily nourishment needed to prepare souls for the final realization of the kingdom. In this passage Jesus does not use the term "kingdom" but "eternal life." In John 3 Jesus speaks in the idiom of the fantastic. If water, being an agent of kingdom life sounds strange, the use of bread as a vehicle of

eternal life seems ludicrous. But a careful study of the progression of thought in John 6 reveals that Jesus' Bread of Life discourse moves from the unbelievable to the utterly impossible. And the story itself anticipates the problem when the Jews ask, "How can this man give his flesh to eat?" (6:52). This is the moment at which human reason fails and we must rely on the authority of the Son of God Himself. Still, faith in Christ's human presence in the Eucharist is prepared for by the recognition that the impossible has already taken place, i.e., that the Logos became flesh.

There is much more in John's Gospel. If space permitted, we could explore the Church in the Gospel focused and encapsulated in the apostolic disciples whom John says Jesus "loved as his own to the end" (Jn 13:1). Or we could plumb the depths of His words in the farewell discourse of John chapters 14-16 where Jesus promises His continuing presence among His disciples through the Person and ministry of the Holy Spirit. That Spirit will now be the agent of Jesus' teaching authority (Magisterium, see Jn 15:26; 16:8,13) and the comfort of Jesus to the disciples. Most poignantly of all, we could immerse ourselves in Jesus' prayer in John 17, Jesus' parting prayer for unity among His future disciples. In one important sense, this prayer is the other bookend of John 1:14. When John says that the Logos became flesh, he highlights the union of God with humanity. In John 17, Jesus is praying for the unity of all humanity with God through Himself. In other words, eternity enters the world through Jesus' Incarnation but it spreads throughout the world by the agency of Jesus' Church. Hidden under the visible structures of the Church is the eternal life and presence of Christ.

This retailing of the mysticism of John's Gospel offers us an answer to our question about how to arrive at the Beatific Vision and the experience of eternity. The only way for us to move from Here to Eternity is for Eternity to move Here. Then by returning with all the blessed in its train, Eternity ushers us into a timeless existence of praise, adoration, and love. Once we are safely ensconced in Eternity, we then have the one thing that alone fulfills our human nature: love, the Love that is God Himself.

In the end what matters is that we experience a continual conversion of heart and mind that draws heaven down to earth so that earth may be drawn up to heaven. Then, and only then, will conversion be complete. The greatest saints have known and taught this conversion, this *metanoia* as a transformation of the whole person from the inside out. Being Catholic is about so much more than changing churches or theology. It is about so much more than something in this life, the *diesseits*. Becoming Catholic is about the path to heaven, about being renewed in the mind by a process of transformation "from glory to glory." ■

## NEWSLETTER COPIES

CHNetwork encourages members to make copies of the newsletter and distribute to family and friend. We do ask that copies of the newsletter not be sold. Unless otherwise indicated, the contents of this newsletter are Copyright © 2015 by the Coming Home Network International. All rights reserved.

## New Easter Converts By the CHNetwork Staff

Each year, the Coming Home Network International's staff is blessed to receive e-mails and phone calls from members who have come into full-communication with the Catholic Church. We have compiled some correspondence from former non-Catholic laity who were received into the Catholic Faith at the 2015 Easter Vigil. We ask that you keep them and all new converts in your prayers as they seek a deeper walk with Jesus.

### ▶ FROM ERIN

#### A FORMER PENTECOSTAL

So wonderful to hear from you! Yes, my husband, two sons, and myself joined the Church at Easter Vigil! It was a beautiful night!!! So much joy! We have been living in that joy since then! Thank you for praying for us and checking in on us! It has touched our hearts! I have a fellow colleague and his family at my work, who is on this same faith journey and I have recommended the Coming Home Network to them! It's amazing to share my journey so soon after traveling it; I pray I may share over and over again to lead many people to Christ!

### ▶ FROM DAVID

#### A FORMER DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

I was received into the Catholic Church Saturday night. The most important part for me was when I got up from the pew and went to receive Communion for the first time. I had waited a long time for this and it really overwhelmed me. Looking back I am still overwhelmed and still so grateful for all the support I have received. Just wanted to let you know.

### ▶ FROM AMANDA

#### A FORMER PENTECOSTAL

Life is so good. I was confirmed at the Easter Vigil and it was amazing. I have always loved Easter but I finally realized why it's so dear to my heart, really amazing. There are so many amazing things that have happened to me throughout RCIA. It's really amazing how far I have come and all the hurdles that the Holy Family helped bring me through. I remember at the first Friday of doing the stations during Lent I finally understood Mary as queen mother, it just made sense and I remember sobbing not of sorrow but from a place of deep love — how did I live my life so long and not have this family?! I was Protestant for 22 years and only now am I really getting that richness of faith I have always longed for.

### ▶ FROM DAN

#### A FORMER BAPTIST

I was received into the Catholic Church this past Easter and it was wonderful to take Communion as a Catholic for

the first time. I am so grateful for the Catholic Church, the Catholics and the Holy Spirit for giving the world the Tradition, Scriptures, and Sacraments. I'm so thankful that I can go to Mass any day of the week and call on God anytime or a saint or my Guardian Angel to intercede for me. I'm also fortunate to have a perpetual adoration chapel in my area, it's a saving grace to be able to sit before Jesus whenever I need Him ... I'm working on saying thank you more instead of "I need" this or that. Again, thank you for the letter; I'm always impressed with the love of the Catholic Church.

### ▶ FROM THE WIFE OF AN EPISCOPAL PRIEST

I was indeed received at the Easter Vigil. Everything went very smoothly and it was a very beautiful service. My dear husband has been very supportive. I attend Catholic church on Saturday evening and then attend his church on Sunday morning to support him and his work as an Episcopalian priest...I have no regrets and know that that was the right step for me ... I am very grateful to our Lady for all her help in dealing with impossible things. Thank you so much for your prayers.

### ▶ FROM CATHERINE

#### A FORMER UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AND NONDENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIAN

Thank you for checking in on me. Yes, both my brother and I were received at the Easter Vigil. It was wonderful ... the Catholic Church is now our "home" ... in more ways than one! Thank you for your prayers. I have so much to learn, but am so happy to be learning the Truth.

### ▶ FROM JENNIFER

#### A FORMER PLYMOUTH BRETHREN

Yes, we were both received at Easter! I am still rather shocked to find myself Catholic, but I am also more than thrilled to discover the reality of Catholicism as well. There seems to be so much to learn and the reality of it all is hard to take in at times. I always feel like I am only scratching the surface ... Listening and reading all those other converts' journeys when I was at the beginning of mine made a huge difference in my comfort level. It was nice to know that I was not going categorically insane and that other

people had seen the same things as I had and had the same questions, and that they had come through the experience relatively unscathed. So there you have it in a rather cliché nutshell. Thanks for being there for all of us, CHN!

► **FROM CHERYL-LEE**  
*A FORMER PENTECOSTAL*

Since we last spoke, I underwent RCIA at my local parish and at this year's Easter Vigil, I was baptized, confirmed, and received the Holy Eucharist!! I still feel overwhelmed that I'm now, a Roman Catholic! I thank God every day for it!! The Coming Home Network was one of my big influences in going through with RCIA so thanks for that! I am just beginning to read at Mass now as a trainee lector, which is such a privilege to read aloud from Sacred Scripture! I'm praying constantly and daily. I still go to daily and Sunday Mass as cannot wait to receive Our Lord concealed in the Sacred Host and chalice. My two daughters have since been baptized and my eldest made her First Confession at the beginning of March.

► **FROM MELANIE**  
*A FORMER AGNOSTIC*

The Easter Vigil was beautiful and very moving. I was touched and surprised by the Protestant friends and family who agreed to attend. I even had an atheist friend attend without a single negative comment. My mother does not understand and does not feel comfortable talking about it yet but she was there. Is it normal to be unable to stop smiling while receiving Communion? I just can't help it. All is well for now. You all are in my prayers as well.

► **FROM DIANE**  
*A FORMER METHODIST*

Thank you so much for checking on me. I was confirmed into the Catholic Faith at the Easter Vigil and it was amazing. We had a large class and it was a very exciting night for all of us, especially since we've studied for so long during RCIA. I've made many friends and have come to love my faith and intend to be active! ...Thank you again for the newsletter each month because it encouraged me greatly. I loved reading the conversion stories and felt I had much in common with many of the converts. I'm sure that the CHN changes many lives. May God bless your ministry. ■

## THANK YOU!

Marcus Grodi and the staff of the CHNetwork would like to extend our deep gratitude and appreciation to Bruce Sullivan and Dr. Charles Feicht who have served until recently on our Board of Directors. We are grateful for the many valuable contributions they have made over the years to the direction and mission of the CHNetwork. Thank you both!



## MARCUS GRODI'S SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

**July 11, 2015**

Christendom College Summer Conference  
Encountering Christ – Apologetics & the New Evangelization  
Front Royal, VA  
[www.christendom.edu/news/conference.php](http://www.christendom.edu/news/conference.php) | 800-877-5456



## EWTN'S THE JOURNEY HOME on television and radio, hosted by Marcus Grodi, president of CHNetwork



**TELEVISION**

Mondays at 8 PM ET — Encores: Tuesdays 1 AM ET, Fridays 1 PM ET  
*The Best of the Journey Home*: Monday-Thursday 1 PM ET

**RADIO**

Mondays at 8 PM ET — Encores: Saturdays 7 AM ET, Sundays 1 AM ET and 5 PM ET  
*The Best of the Journey Home*: Monday-Thursday 12 AM ET

**July 6**

Leighton Drake\*  
*Former Agnostic, Re-air from 9/23/13*

**July 13**

Fr. Leo Patalinghug\*  
*Revert*

**July 20**

Ryan Topping\*  
*Former Mennonite*

**July 27**

Michael Lofton\*  
*Former Baptist/Presbyterian*

\*Schedule is subject to change.

# My Return Home: A Thank You

By Jean Ronan

*I was away for a while.  
Half-left, really. On and off to Mass for 20 years.  
Not an "option," but treated as such. Knowing better.  
The road brought me back to my roots.  
The whys of my leaving matter not, perhaps, but partly out of  
boredom, unseeing the meaning, unfeeling the reality.  
Until the day grace shouted "come back!" and  
Handed over streams of hope, joy and love, as waves of heavenly  
celebration.  
Because another Prodigal child returns (Luke 15:11-32).  
The immense joy felt with my return, had it been contemplated,  
Would have had me back sooner.  
Where was all this before? I still wonder.  
Were these same eyes unseeing?  
There was joy in heaven on my return,  
I feel that in my heart and soul,  
And I wonder why the deep richness of faith wasn't there back  
then. Why is it here now?  
How did I come "Home?" Hard to articulate, but I thank in part,  
the many stories of "Coming Home" to the Church,  
Many had so far to come,  
Their misunderstandings so embedded,  
Their mistrust so deep-seated.  
Catholicism never considered.  
Until they learned more,  
And got past the rumors, the false teachings, the prejudice.  
And found the truth, and had to follow that truth.  
They tell their stories,  
One by one, about Coming Home.  
All different, but all somehow the same.  
I listened, and watched, and read, with awe and wonder.  
Their joy is so complete,*

*And they understand their faith far better than me,  
Though I was baptized in the cradle, then 7 years of Catholic  
school under my belt.  
They are like one who spent time in foreign lands.  
There is nothing like being far away,  
To appreciate Coming Home all the more.  
Their appreciation of their new faith showed me how to appreciate  
my old faith.  
Their knowledge of my Faith taught me to learn more of my Faith.  
Their talk of how the early Church Fathers influenced their  
conversion made me wonder who they were, and what they  
taught, so I found out.  
They embarrassed me with their great knowledge of Scripture, so  
I started reading the Bible.  
Their willingness to serve the Church increased my willingness to  
serve, and I started to serve the Church.  
Their "Journeys" showed me I'm on one too, but hadn't looked at  
it quite that way before.  
Their excitement helped get me interested, instead of taking my  
faith for granted, instead of going through the motions, instead  
of staying poorly catechized.  
Their courage impressed me. Truth is powerful.  
What is it about the return?  
The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) feeling forgiveness,  
Finally seeing the treasure that was always there,  
He wonders why he hadn't noticed it before.  
A second try at Faith,  
and I found Hope.  
A second try at Grace,  
and I found Love.  
Thanks be to God and His mysterious ways,  
I too am Home. ■*

## SUPPORT CHNETWORK

For your convenience, CHNetwork is able to automatically deduct monthly donations directly from your credit card, checking, or savings account. If you would like to set up an automatic monthly donation, please go to [chnetwork.org/donate/](http://chnetwork.org/donate/) or complete this form and mail to:

**CHNetwork**  
Attention: Ann Moore  
PO Box 8290  
Zanesville, OH 43702

Please contact Ann at 740-450-1175 or [ann@chnetwork.org](mailto:ann@chnetwork.org) if you have any questions or concerns.

### Your information

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Address line 1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Address line 2 \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone number \_\_\_\_\_  
Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Yes! I wish to make a monthly donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ on auto-payment from my:

Checking account or  Savings account

Bank routing number (9-digit number) \_\_\_\_\_

Account number \_\_\_\_\_

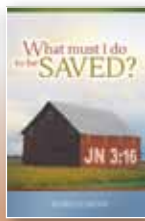
Credit card

Card number \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration date CVV Code \_\_\_\_\_

Visa  MasterCard

Discover  AmericanExpress



Visit [www.chresources.com](http://www.chresources.com)

or call 740-450-1175 for these and other great resources to learn more about the Catholic Faith.

# Prayer List



## Clergy

- For a Lutheran pastor in Pennsylvania, that the Lord Jesus would show him the path he has set before him to the Catholic Church.
- For a Charismatic professor in Tennessee, that he may discover the joy and freedom of the fullness of the Truth in the Catholic Faith.
- For Paul, a Nazarene, that, as he continues to read, the Holy Spirit would show him the best route to full-communication with the Catholic Church.
- For Daniel, a pastor in the upper Midwest, that the truth he is discovering may guide him home to full-communication with the Successor of St. Peter.
- For a former missionary in Ohio, that she may accept the apostolic authority of the Church which derives from our Lord Jesus Christ.
- For Paul, a Disciples of Christ minister, that his hunger for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist would bring him home to the Church of his youth.
- For Scott who continues to look for work since leaving his Protestant pastorate and entering the Church.

## Laitiy

- For Ken, that the obstacles preventing him from being received into full-communication with the Catholic Church be removed.
- For Leslie as she asks various questions about Catholic teaching and practice, that the Holy Spirit will guide her steps.
- For Sherry who was unexpectedly drawn to the Catholic Church and is reading material on the Catholic Faith.
- For a man who was received into the Church this Easter but needs prayers for his family's hearts to be softened towards his conversion.
- For Ray who is having a difficult time in his journey.
- For a nondenominational Christian in the south, that he find peace and the ability to move forward with his journey.
- For a woman in New England, that she be able to overcome the negative experiences in her past and find true healing and peace.
- For Betsy, that she have clarity and direction as to her interest in the Catholic Faith.
- For a woman in the United Kingdom to know how best to proceed with telling her family and friends of her wish to be Catholic.
- For Deborah who is waiting on an annulment decision, that she be able to receive Jesus in the Eucharist soon.

- For Ken, that the obstacles preventing him from being received into full-communication with the Catholic Church be removed.
- For Cindy and her husband as they seek answers to their questions about the Catholic Faith.
- For Scott who has struggles with Catholic doctrine, that he continue to be open to the Holy Spirit's guidance.
- For a member of the Reformed Church who is drawn to the Catholic Church but is disappointed his family doesn't share his interest.
- For Bob who is considering returning to his Catholic roots.
- For a nondenominational man who is moving beyond his anti-Catholic background and is intrigued by Pope Francis.

In every issue we include timely prayer concerns from the membership. All members are encouraged to pray at least one hour each month before the Blessed Sacrament for the needs, both general and specific, of the CHNetwork and its members and supporters.

Please submit all prayer requests and answers to CHNetwork Prayer List, PO Box 8290, Zanesville, OH 43702 or email prayer requests to [prayers@chnetwork.org](mailto:prayers@chnetwork.org).

We use only first names to preserve privacy.

**Please also pray for the Coming Home Network International's staff and Board of Directors.**

**President/Founder,** Marcus Grodi  
(former Presbyterian pastor)

**Resident Theologian,** Dr. Kenneth Howell  
(former Presbyterian pastor)

**Senior Advisor: History & Theology,** Jim Anderson  
(former Lutheran)

**Director of Studio/Media,** Scott Scholten  
(former Presbyterian)

**Office Manager,** Ann Moore  
**IT/Facilities Coordinator,** Bill Bateson  
(former Mormon)

**Publications and Laity Coordinator,** Mary Clare Pieczynski

**Manager of Outreach,** JonMarc Grodi

**Financial Assistant,** Wendy Hart  
(former United Methodist)

**Board of Directors:**  
Marcus Grodi (President)  
Msgr. Frank Lane (Chaplain)  
Dr. Robert Geiger (Vice President)  
Dr. Marian Schuda (Director)  
Donald Brey (Director)



## ...Journeys Home Continued...

► “Journeys Home” continued from page 2

by any connection of the family with the Presbyterian Church, because no such connection existed. All told, and extending back at least as far as 1800, the religious history of my father’s ancestors showed no discernible attachment to Calvinistic doctrine.

### A turning

This realization of the relatively broad religious background of my ancestors went a long way to softening me to the claims of the Catholic Church. In addition, I was beginning to tire of the limited message being proclaimed in my Presbyterian church. By the early 2000s, it seemed that almost every sermon ended with a reference to one very specific kind of Christian activity, usually work in a homeless shelter or soup kitchen. This is part of the Gospel, to be sure, but it is only a part. To make matters worse, the sermons often ended, not with a call to such work, but with self-congratulation to the congregation for engaging in it. In a congregation of over a thousand people, the emphasis was on a field of activity that applied only to a few.

At the same time, the sermons and Scripture readings were beginning to reflect the gender confusion that marks our era. The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible that our church used had been updated in 1989 to make it more gender-neutral. That was not enough for some of our clergy, though, who decided that since God is neither male nor female, then no gender-specific word should ever be used to describe God. This led to the rewriting of Scripture on the fly as it was read, using such phrases as “God so loved the world that God gave God’s only begotten, uh, Son...” One sermon had the phrase in it, “One day, God said to Godself...” My sister asked me during a visit, “Doesn’t God get a pronoun in this church?” The effect, it seemed to me, was to depersonalize God.

This seemingly minor annoyance started me on what I thought would be simply a search for a church that reliably adhered to the words of Scripture in the readings. I was attracted to the Episcopal church down the street — and all the more so because my wife, Elizabeth, had grown up Episcopalian and had never quite abandoned that attachment — but that denomination was even closer than the Presbyterians to splitting up over such matters as gender issues!

Since I had never desired to get involved with any of the more strictly “Reformed” Presbyterian churches, much less with any of the evangelical denominations, I could readily see that the Catholic Church was becoming my only option. Unlike many other converts, I did not find this to be a frightening or unwelcome prospect. I proceeded to read practically all of the popular apologetic writers of our time: Scott Hahn, Thomas Howard, Patrick Madrid, Steven Ray, Fr. Dwight Longenecker, and Marcus Grodi, among others. I also read some of the works of earlier converts, such as Cardinal Newman and Ronald Knox, as well as Cardinal Gibbons’ 19th century book, *The Faith of Our Fathers*. I was convinced by all of them. One of the first things I learned about the Catholic Church was that it had never

changed its doctrines concerning faith and morals to conform to fads or trends of any given era. As a lifelong Protestant, I had been made quite aware of the corruption of certain popes, but I had never known that even the worst popes did not change Church doctrine.

I also learned that the on-the-fly Scripture alterations that annoyed me were symptomatic of the larger Protestant problem of looking primarily to the individual as the source of authority on matters of faith and morals. In fact, this practice of altering Scripture took that idea a step further, because it not only involved individualized *interpretations* of Scripture, it also involved individualized *amendments* of Scripture to conform to what those Protestant ministers believed Scripture *should have* said.

There were also some supernatural things that were happening without my really realizing it. Around the end of 2005, I had read Peggy Noonan’s *John Paul the Great*, which had a lot to say about the Rosary. I did not even know exactly what the Rosary was, but soon thereafter had the opportunity to buy a new book, Gary Jansen’s *The Rosary: A Journey to the Beloved*. Jansen suggested an adaptation of the Rosary for Protestant believers, substituting the “Jesus prayer” (“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner”) for the Hail Marys. This was comfortable enough, so from time to time, I would say the prayer in that format. Soon, though, I decided to become more daring, actually saying the Hail Marys, and hoping (as Scott Hahn had hoped) that this wouldn’t anger God! I can’t remember how often I actually recited a Marian Rosary in those days, but am firmly convinced that the Blessed Mother acted on these prayers, even though they came from someone who was not even sure what he was asking for.

By the spring and summer of 2007, I had learned all I needed to know to realize that it was time to make the jump to being Catholic. I checked the website of the nearby Catholic parish, found out when RCIA would start, and signed up. This parish was near the University of South Carolina. We had brilliant RCIA teachers: a nanophysicist, a biologist — both nationally known — and an outstanding medical student. Rounding it out was a faithful parishioner who had been a high school teacher for many years. The insights of those four teachers only served to ratify the decision I had already made.

I was also fortunate to have a wife who was quite willing to enter the Catholic Faith at the same time I did. I was therefore spared the domestic difficulties that many converts have experienced. Since joining the Church, she has done so much work for the parish that I often wonder whether my only purpose in life was to assist her in becoming Catholic!

### Encouragement

When I was well on the way to being received into the Church, an unexpected form of historical encouragement appeared. Somehow I became aware of Eamon Duffy’s book, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580*. (Note: This book can be purchased through the CHNetwork by calling

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

740-450-1175 or online at [www.chresources.com](http://www.chresources.com). Only a limited quantity is available.) Duffy's thesis, backed by considerable historical evidence, was that

[L]ate medieval Catholicism [in England] exerted an enormously strong, diverse, and vigorous hold over the imagination and the loyalty of the people up to the very moment of Reformation. Traditional religion had about it no particular marks of exhaustion or decay, and indeed in a whole host of ways, from the multiplication of vernacular religious books to adaptations within the national and regional cult of the saints, was showing itself well able to meet needs and new conditions. (p. 4)

This came as quite a surprise, because over time I had acquired just the opposite impression: that the English people by the time of the Protestant Reformation were clamoring to be rid of Catholicism. Now, for the first time, it occurred to me that many, if not most, of my English ancestors of the early Reformation period may not have been "intentional Protestants," that is, people who affirmatively split from existing versions of Christianity. Instead, they were more likely to have had Protestantism forced on them from the top down. Catholicism in England was destroyed, not abandoned.

A few years earlier, I had read the following description by Fr. Andrew Greeley of what he called "the Catholic imagination:"

Catholics live in an enchanted world, a world of statues and holy water, stained glass and votive candles, saints and religious medals, rosary beads and holy pictures. But these Catholic paraphernalia are mere hints of a deeper and more pervasive religious sensibility which inclines Catholics to see the Holy lurking in creation. As Catholics, we find our houses and our world haunted by a sense that the objects, events, and persons of daily life are revelations of grace. (*The Catholic Imagination*, p. 1)

Professor Duffy and Fr. Greeley were talking about different aspects of the same thing. It was a major surprise to find that the imaginations of the English people five hundred years ago were deprived of this richness, not because the English thought there was something wrong with it, but only because it was forcibly pulled away from them. As for me, I had already decided that I preferred this "enchanted world" to the more austere Protestant worldview in which I had been raised. It was now becoming apparent that there was no theological or historical reason that offered any compelling reason to remain where I was.

### A Font of Conversion

At this point it is necessary to backtrack a few years. In the early 2000s, I visited England for the first time. I had been an Anglophile since my teens. Reading the works of C.S. Lewis in my 20s was one of many experiences that put England at the center of the world, as far as I was concerned. One of the many factors in my conversion was an incident that occurred during that first visit to England.

That trip to England lasted only a few days. I stayed in Kent with family members who were also visiting England. On the first day, we visited Canterbury Cathedral, which I viewed as an interesting Anglican church with a long history, but nothing more.

Driving around a day or two later, we came upon St. Augustine Church of Brookland, a few miles east of Rye. That small church had been built around 1250. In it was a leaden baptismal font that was at least nine hundred years old.

I was not so far gone as to believe that "God is an Englishman," to quote the title of a 1970 novel. Still, I came to a realization when I saw the nine hundred-year-old font in the Kentish church: Even if God had been an Englishman, so to speak, He would have been a Catholic long before He was an Anglican, and for a much longer time. St. Augustine of Canterbury had evangelized England from Rome starting in 597 A.D., and Catholic Christianity had already existed in England by the 200s.

All of this brought home to me that the Anglican Church, which started only in the 1530s, was an upstart. It was not at all the historic church of England. Even younger were the Puritan, Presbyterian, and Quaker faiths, whose adherents separated themselves from the Anglicans between the mid-1500s and the mid-1600s.

The split between England and Rome, now nearly five hundred years in the past, occurred so long ago that it is easy enough for an unthinking observer of history (such as myself) to fail to realize that the Christians of England must have been something other than Anglicans in the many centuries before the early 1500s. Prior to seeing the font, I simply had not let it sink in that virtually all Christians in England were Roman Catholics prior to the time of Henry VIII, and that they had been Roman Catholics for the previous thousand years or more. Henry himself had no desire to impose Protestant theology and practices. That happened only after Henry's death in 1547.

All of this demonstrated the truth of John Henry Newman's oft-quoted statement, "To be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant." For me, a good deal of this historical realization unfolded from the simple sight of a nine hundred-year-old baptismal font in Kent.

### Did I have Catholic ancestors?

With all of the English Protestants in my background, extending back for almost 500 years, it once had seemed like a stupid question to ask whether I had Catholic ancestors. The answer would be: "Of course not." I mentioned to an RCIA instructor that I had identified many of my ancestors, and had not seen a Catholic among them. He pointed out that my Christian ancestors before the Reformation would all have been Catholics! So the question of whether there are Catholics in the family tree of a person of English ancestry is indeed kind of a stupid question, but for the opposite reason than I had originally thought. The answer is: "Of course!"

## ...Journeys Home Continued...

This meant that my more distant ancestors, like those of anyone else of primarily English origin, include literally thousands of English Catholics who were alive in the early 1500s, just before England ceased to be a Catholic country. There are potentially ten or even twenty thousand such ancestors in the family tree of a person born in the middle of the 20th century.

Of all of those thousands who were living when Henry VIII separated from the Roman Catholic Church in the 1530s, I know something about just one family, that of John Fenimore (c. 1480-1541) and his descendants. They lived in the area of two villages that were about two miles apart in south central England. Both villages had parish church buildings by the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. There is no reason to doubt that the Fenimores of the 1400s and early 1500s attended these Catholic parish churches in their home villages. The family was probably in the area as far back as the Norman Conquest in 1066. If so, they would have worshipped in those church buildings when they were first built in the 1100s or 1200s.

It would be interesting to know how the Fenimores fared in the religious turbulence in England that started with Henry VIII, but no information has yet been found. All that can be said with any certainty is that the earliest known Fenimore ancestor, John Fenimore (c. 1480-1541), almost surely was a Catholic, simply because everyone in his era was a Catholic. Whatever may have happened in this family after the split caused by Henry VIII, it is virtually certain that prior to that split, the ancestors of my English Protestant ancestors were English Catholics, and in great numbers.

### An incomplete education

Once I slowly came to the realization that my more distant ancestors were so obviously, and probably nearly unanimously, English Catholics, I then became interested in learning how my Protestant ancestors came to be Protestant. I located one of the Sunday School books I had read as an adolescent, *The Church of Our Fathers* by Dr. Roland H. Bainton. Bainton was a Protestant scholar of the Reformation. *The Church of Our Fathers* sets forth his belief that when a church becomes corrupt or stale, the faithful should split from it and establish something new.

This seemed to make sense, but it disregarded two Catholic principles that a person raised Protestant would probably not know. The first is the doctrine of apostolic succession in a direct line from the Apostles, and the second is the doctrine that the Catholic Church is protected by the Holy Spirit from teaching error in matters of faith or morals. For one who believes in those doctrines, it follows that the Roman Catholic Church is not an organization that one can simply abandon if its leadership becomes flawed or corrupt. Instead, it is a Body against which Jesus promised the gates of hell cannot prevail (Matthew 16:18). He promised that the Holy Spirit would guide the disciples “into all the truth” (Jn 16:13). The remedy for the flaws of this unique institution simply cannot be for one to leave it and set up another organization that supposedly corrects the flaws.

In time, I came to realize that I had been schooled in the American rendition of a version of English history that had been “erected to justify the English Reformation and its aftermath” (Joseph Pearce, *Race with the Devil*, p. 27). In the version I was taught in South Jersey, heroic Puritans and Quakers stood firm against wrongheaded establishment Anglicans. It was a view of history written by the winners, or at least those who “won” for the next few centuries. I managed not to notice that the two sects were so divided that Puritans persecuted Quakers to the point of death.

### In Communion

On Christmas morning 2007, after I had started RCIA, I had an experience of being in communion with my Catholic ancestors and their experience of the faith.

I went to the 8:15 a.m. Mass on Christmas morning. I had only attended a handful of Masses by then, but was still struck immediately by the near-total silence in the Gothic church when I walked in. As I rounded the furthest back column on the right side of the church, the early sunlight of a winter morning filtered through the stained glass and shone brightly into that corner. The entire picture bore some resemblance to what I imagined my ancient Catholic ancestors might have seen centuries ago.

On that silent, sunlit, Christmas morning, I felt a connection to long-ago generations of Catholic ancestors. I realized that I would soon be entering into communion with my ancestors and their faith — not just my spiritual ancestors, but my biological ancestors as well.

We were received into full-communion with the Church at the 2008 Easter Vigil. That particular Holy Saturday was a contentious day in our household, with arguments breaking out over things that really did not relate to the faith. Perhaps the Devil wanted to get one last shot at us. I have heard of others who have had similar experiences just prior to their reception. Matters weren't helped when we got an ad that very day from *First Things*, a Catholic magazine, with a quote on the envelope (intended to be ironic), “You Catholics are all going to Hell.” I declined to accept this as a “sign.” Instead, we made it through the day, joyfully entered the Church, and with God's help will continue to grow in grateful faith. ■



KEN WOODINGTON was born in Camden, NJ and was raised in the Presbyterian Faith. He has been practicing governmental and constitutional law in Columbia, SC, for forty years. Ken and Elizabeth (Libit) Young were married in 1972. They currently attend St. Joseph in Columbia, SC.

### BLOG

Please visit [www.chnetwork.org/blog](http://www.chnetwork.org/blog) to comment on and discuss this story!

**The Coming Home Network International**

PO Box 8290

Zanesville, OH 43702-8290

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



SHARE  
THE **BEAUTY** AND **TRUTH**  
OF THE **CATHOLIC FAITH**  
WITH OUR NON-CATHOLIC BROTHERS AND SISTERS

GO TO [WWW.CHNETWORK.ORG](http://WWW.CHNETWORK.ORG) FOR MORE INFORMATION.

July 2015 Newsletter